EPISODE 441: WEIRD & WACKY RULES AND INTERACTIONS

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1) INTRO JIMMY & JOSH
 @jfwong - @JoshLeeKwai - @CommandCast

Magic is maybe the most complex game that's ever been created. You can play it for years and still come across niche rules interactions that you don't know about. Often they surprise you. Sometimes, knowing these weird fringe cases can give you lines to victory that most people wouldn't see or know about. Today, we're talking about the weirdest and wackiest MTG rules and interactions.

CHANNEL FIREBALL **ULTRAPRO #1** **PATREON: DREW WAGERS **
Note: We are doing exclusive content only for Patrons! Reaction/Commentary of our very first ep of GK!

2) MAIN TOPIC: **WEIRD & WACKY RULES**
This episode was inspired by a recent video by Sam on his Rhystic Studies YouTube channel (show thumbnail, link in the show notes). It's about the card Gifts Ungiven and how Frank Karsten used his knowledge of the rules surrounding that card to find a sequence that gave him victory in a high stakes MTG tournament.

That video got us thinking: What other weird and unintuitive rules exist that might be important to know about in a game of Commander? After some research, we found quite a few.

DISCLAIMER: TRUST BUT VERIFY (we're pretty sure we got all of this right, but MTG is complex). If you have questions visit JUDGE CHAT: https://chat.magicjudges.org/mtgrules/ (link in show notes)

FAIL TO FIND (orange banner)
This is the rule referred to in the Rhystic Studies video. It states that if you are ever searching your library, you can almost always fail to find. Why is this? Because otherwise you'd have to give your deck to your opponent or a judge every time you failed to find, in order for them to verify.

They've refined the rules in recent years, so there is some further nuance to it:
- Gifts Ungiven is banned in Commander. It also got errata'd to say the words "up to" and that's how they word most cards now days (Explosive Vegetation/Plea for Guidance/Shared Summons)
- The most common use of this rule is when controlling an opponent's turn (Emrakul, the Promised End/Mindslaver/Worst Fears)

- Some people think you can *always* fail to find, but that's not true. Search effects that do not require you to reveal, that only search for a number of cards, <u>must</u> find that number, *if possible*:

> • **701.19d** If a player is searching a hidden zone simply for a quantity of cards, such as "a card" or "three cards," that player must find that many cards (or as many as possible, if the zone doesn't contain enough cards).

- This is cards like: (Demonic Tutor/Vampiric Tutor/Increasing Ambition/Final Parting)
- You can choose to find 0 - 1 cards with Grow From The Ashes or Reclaim the Wastes (kicked)

Speaking of controlling another player's turn:
SPELLSKITE GOODNIGHT (black banner)
Did you know that Spellskite's ability can target ANY spell or ability? Spellskite does not have to be a legal target. So if someone cracks a fetchland, Spellskite can activate. It normally just doesn't DO anything.
    -However, if you are controlling an opponent's turn and they have a Spellskite…

BEGINNING OF COMBAT STEP (orange banner) (previous black banner goes away at this point)
Understanding how combat works can help you properly time things to your advantage. This is how the combat phase is structured:

> **The Combat Phase:**
> **1) Beginning of Combat Step**
> **2) Declare Attackers Step**
> **3) Declare Blockers Step**
> **4) Combat Damage Step**
> **5) End of Combat Step**

It's important to know that the "beginning of combat" is not during the main phase, but is before attackers are declared. So, if you remove or tap down an opponent's creature, they cannot then play sorcery speed stuff. (NOTE: Most people probably know this one)

END OF COMBAT STEP (orange banner)
This one usually confuses a lot of people. Notice that damage happens (the "Combat Damage Step") and then there is another step after that. Let's look at the structure of this End of Combat step:

> From the *Comprehensive Rules* (November 19, 2021—*Innistrad: Crimson Vow*)
> • **511. End of Combat Step**
>   • **511.1.** The end of combat step has no turn-based actions. Once it begins, the active player gets priority. (See rule 117, "Timing and Priority.")
>   • **511.2.** Abilities that trigger "at end of combat" trigger as the end of combat step begins. Effects that last "until end of combat" expire at the end of the combat phase.
>   • **511.3.** As soon as the end of combat step ends, all creatures and planeswalkers are removed from combat. After the end of combat step ends, the combat phase is over and the postcombat main phase begins (see rule 505).

What this means is that there is a time period when creatures are still considered to be in combat even though damage has already been dealt. The most common use of this is:

RECONNAISSANCE TRICK (black banner)
Read the card: Reconnaissance. Seems like it's supposed to be used to protect your creatures in combat. A more common usage is to give all your stuff vigilance. How does this work?

MAZE OF ITH (black banner)
You can do a similar trick with Maze of Ith (works well with Sword of Feast and Famine).
- *You can also do really tricky stuff with creatures that untap multiple lands (infinite mana Argothian Elder / Krosan Restorer)*

ATTACK-RIFICE (black banner)
This comes up less often in Commander but you can also use this with cards like Wing Shards / Blessed Alliance to be more effective with "sacrifice an attacking creature" cards. (If you block and kill the small ones)

CLONING CREATURE LANDS (orange banner) (previous black banner goes away at this point)
There's an interesting interaction if you clone a creature land (like Mutavault). The clone becomes an "unanimated" copy of Mutavault. Basically a land that has to be activated to become a creature. This turns Phantasmal Image into an OK ramp spell.
- *Question: Is it worth running Mutavault/Mishra's Factory/etc just for the off-chance of turning your Phantasmal Image into a ramp spell if you need to?*

MIRRORWEAVE TRICK (black banner)
Cool interaction: you can use Mirrorweave to dodge a board wipe (like Supreme Verdict) turning all of your creatures into Mutavaults that are not creatures until you activate them. This works with any creature lands (Celestial Colonnade/Den of the Bugbear/etc). Also works against Cyclonic Rift and stuff that says "nonland permanents".

Speaking of creature lands:
ABILITY STACKING (orange banner) (previous black banner goes away at this point)
Did you know that with infinite mana you can insta-win with Den of the Bugbear? (Need infinite RED mana, of course).
- This same thing also works with Raging Ravine and Genju of the Fields.
- Incidentally, a lot of people don't know when something enters "tapped and attacking" you can choose to have it attacking any player/planeswalker. Unless it specifics (like Kaalia of the Vast)

MIDROLL BREAK

AURAS AND HEXPROOF (orange banner)

Auras on target when they are cast. So you cannot cast Imprisoned in the Moon/Song of the Dyrads targeting a creature with Lightning Greaves on it. BUT - if an aura enters the battlefield and is not cast, then you "choose" a legal target. Choosing is not targeting. So it gets around shroud/hexproof.

- *(Teferi's Time Twist, Aminatou, Venser the Sojourner)*
- *This is why Council's Judgement gets around hexproof. It says "choose." (This is ALSO the reason Olivia was able to choose Jimmy with Saskia in Blingmas, despite his Teferi's Protection.)*

Speaking of blinking enchantments:

ETERNAL OBLIVION (RING)(orange banner)

These cards are templated in a way that has separate triggers for the exiling of the target card and returning it. So, if you can get rid of the O-Ring or Fiend Hunter while the EtB is still on the stack, the target will stay permanently exiled.

> *It's a little hard to blink, since you have to do it at instant speed (and not a lot of stuff blinks Enchantments) BUT you can also just sac the enchantment to a Claws of Gix or something. Or bounce it with Chain of Vapors, etc.*

STIFLE TRAPPING (black banner)

If you have an effect that counters a triggered ability, you can stop effects like O-Ring and Fiend Hunter from returning someone's Commander to the battlefield. Trapping them in exile FOREVER.

- *(Disallow/Nimble Obstructionist)*
- *Also works with "End the Turn" stuff (Time Stop/Glorious End/Discontinuity)*
  - Watch out Norin the Wary

RETURN FROM BANISHMENT (orange banner) (previous black banner goes away at this point)

A lot of effects similar to O-Ring have been re-templated in recent years. Good example: Banishing Light. (Also Banisher Priest/Grasp of Fate) There USED TO BE an interesting interaction where this card would pull your Commander back into play, even from the command zone.

- *Placing a Commander into the command zone used to be a replacement effect. So when Banishing Light got removed, it would pull the Commander onto the battlefield from there.*
  - *This is because the command zone used to be the first public zone your commander would go to.*
  - *This no longer works. With the new Commander Death rule implemented in 2020, your commander will go to exile, then when state-based actions are checked, you can choose to move it to the command zone. This causes Banishing Light (et al) to lose track of it.*
  - *NOTE: Just because your commander goes to another zone doesn't always mean you can move it to the command zone – you need there to be a moment where state-based actions are checked. So if it goes to that zone and leaves that zone all as part of a single effect on the stack resolving, there is no opportunity to move it to the command zone (Necromantic Selection). I.e. someone steals your commander and hits it with Ghostly Flicker. Your commander is exiled, but it returns to the battlefield immediately, you have no opportunity to zone it.*

- *Cannot stifle something returning from banishing light, because it's just an effect that lasts for a set duration, not a trigger that goes on the stack. Similar to until end of turn vs. at the end of turn*

IT THAT STILL BETRAYS (orange banner)
Something that still works (and is pretty unintuitive TBH) is It That Betrays. If you sacrifice your Commander to it, even if you put it into the command zone, the controller of It That Betrays will get that card onto the battlefield. It That Betrays does not reference a zone, so it doesn't care at all *where* the thing went. If it was sacrificed, it'll find it.

FASTER THAN THE STACK (orange banner)
Split second spells are hard to interact with. BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE. One thing to keep in mind is that mana abilities can still be activated:

MANA ABILITIES (black banner)
But what good does it do to tap a land or something for mana if you aren't allowed to cast a spell or activate an ability?
- *(Ashnod's Altar/Phyrexian Altar/Phyrexian Tower) These can still be used to get around cards like: (Take Possession/Sudden Substitution/Word of Seizing)*
- *If you have a Grave Pact or something else that triggers on death, you can still get that trigger with any of the above Altars.*

IT'S MORPHIN' TIME (black banner)
Morph is a "special action" that does not use the stack. This means you can interact with split second spells (Sudden Spoiling/Krosan Grip) using cards like: (Willbender/Stratus Dancer/Voidmage Apprentice)
- *They didn't want you to be able to cast shock in response when someone unmorphed.*

DEATHTOUCH (orange banner) (previous black banner goes away at this point)
This is one a lot of you will know. But we've run into some players that don't. Deathtouch has some unique ways it interacts with other keyword abilities.

DEATHTOUCH + TRAMPLE (orange banner)
You only have to assign lethal damage to a creature. So all but 1 damage will trample through. (unless you block with multiple creatures)

DEATHTOUCH + FIRST STRIKE (orange banner)
Because first strike damage is dealt before regular damage, the deathtoucher will usually kill the blocking creature before it has a chance to deal it's damage back.

UNCOUNTERABLE?

It can be important to know that returning a spell to its owner's hand is not the same as countering that spell. If someone casts Supreme Verdict, you can often save yourself with Venser, Shaper Savant. This also gets around Boseiju, Who Shelters All or Lier, Disciple of the Drowned.

- *(Divide by Zero/Narset's Reversal - also Failure // Comply)*
- *Another wording that gets around uncounterable spells: when it says "exile target spell"*
  - *(Ashiok's erasure/Summary dismissal)*

3) **TO THE LISTENERS**

What's the strangest rules interaction that you've ever witnessed in a game of Commander (or another format)?

CHANNEL FIREBALL-OUT #2 **ULTRA PRO #1**

4) **THE END STEP**

Something cool outside the world of Magic. Cobra Kai

5) CLEAN-UP STEP

Big thanks to our amazing team here at The Command Zone! **Arthur Meadowcroft, Shauna Gilles, Damen Lenz, Ladee Danger, Manson Leung, Craig Blanchette, Ashlen Rose, Josh Murphy, Jake Boss, Patrick Nan, Jordan Pridgen, Sam Waldow, Gaurav Gulati, Truc Thai, Jamie Block, Evan Limberger and our new IT guy: Mitch Trafford.**

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